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ABSTRACT

Opposition to outcome-based education (OBE) has become a rallying cry for a number of organized groups that oppose state-education reform initiatives around the country. Such opposition has arisen recently in Kentucky among groups that object to many components of the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA). This paper explores the development of KERA opposition at the state level and in four small, rural school districts and its effect on school restructuring. Data were obtained from interviews with superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, local and state-level leaders in the anti-KERA movement, and State Department of Education officials; observation of various meetings; and document analysis. Findings indicate organized opposition to KERA is not as broad-based as it might appear. However, the movement has highlighted some areas of concern that are shared by many parents and educators around the state. The following concerns were expressed in all four districts: loss of academic basics, lowering of standards, the accountability system, and the nongraded primary. Because parents relied on local district staff for information, professional development for educators may be the most successful way to keep KERA in place. Kentucky policymakers must ensure that the public and local school officials are well informed about KERA; they must also be open to making further adjustments to KERA if research-based evidence suggests that students are not achieving at acceptable levels. Above all, it is important that the lines of communication be kept open among state policymakers, the opposition movement, and the general public. The appendix contains Kentucky's learning goals, original valued outcomes, and academic expectations. (Contains 39 references.) (LMI)

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OPPOSITION TO OUTCOME-BASED EDUCATION IN KENTUCKY

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association
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INTRODUCTION

Opposition to outcome-based education (OBE) has become a rallying cry for a number of organized groups that oppose state education reform initiatives around the country. Such opposition has arisen recently in Kentucky among groups that object to many components of the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA). This paper explores the development of KERA opposition at both the state level and in four small, rural Kentucky school districts. To provide context, we first examine the national development of OBE, the concept of OBE, and opposition to OBE that has erupted on a national level. We then discuss how the movement against OBE has played out in Kentucky.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUTCOME-BASED EDUCATION (OBE)

Educational restructuring efforts since the late 1980's have shifted from a focus on school inputs to an emphasis on student outcomes, known as outcome-based education (OBE). Under OBE, the focus is on product over process, and schools are held accountable not for the routines they follow but for student achievement (Finn, 1987). OBE grew out of the "mastery learning" movement, which was popularized in the late 1960's by Benjamin Bloom at the University of Chicago (Manno, 1994; Olson, 1993; O'Neil, 1993). Under the mastery learning approach, the primary goal was to assist all students in mastering specific instructional objectives. Students were frequently assessed to determine if they had achieved the objectives, and provided with corrective instruction if they had not (Bloom, 1981; Slavin, 1987). While the behavioristic approach of mastery learning fell out of favor in the 1970s, Bloom's ideas gave rise to the notion that <u>all</u> students can achieve academic

objectives if they are given enough time and assistance (O'Neil, 1993).

The concept of OBE emerged in the mid-1980's, following the release of A Nation At Risk, a report that decried the condition of public education and called for fundamental reforms (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Initially, many states responded to this report by enacting top-down, "input-based" reforms that mandated such things as higher graduation requirements, academic enrichment programs, statewide testing of students, and teacher testing (Brizius, Foster & Patton, 1988; Conley, 1989; Ginsberg & Berry, 1990; Timar & Kirp, 1988; Wise, 1988.) Educators soon reacted against these highly regulatory measures, however, and a series of reports and publications in the latter half of the 1980s called for a shift to a focus on student outcomes, with schools rewarded for improved student performance (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; Kearns & Doyle, 1988; National Governors' Association, 1986; Schlechty, 1990; Shanker, 1990).

The OBE approach advocated in proposed restructuring programs of the late 1980s reflected the work of William Spady, director of the "High Success Network" in Colorado (Brandt, 1994; Manno, 1994). Spady's version of OBE differs from mastery learning in that, under OBE, the focus is on helping students achieve broad goals ("exit outcomes") by the time they graduate rather than on ensuring mastery of individual subskills for each course or grade level (Olson, 1993). A key philosophy underlying both OBE and mastery learning is that all or nearly all students can achieve at relatively high levels if the ultimate goal is student learning rather than covering content in a fixed amount of time (Bloom, 1981; Spady, 1988).

THE CONTROVERSY OVER OBE

The concept of OBE took off in the early 1990s. The Education Commission of the States reported in 1993 that at least 34 states were moving toward an OBE system (Manno, 1994; and Olson, 1993). Concurrent with the enthusiastic push toward OBE by educational reformers, however, was the development of strong and increasingly widespread resistance to OBE. The most visible and vocal participants in the opposition movement have been conservative religious and political groups, although other individuals and groups have expressed concern about OBE (Frahm, 1994; Kaplan, 1994; Manno, 1994; Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, undated). Critics of OBE are concerned about two aspects of the OBE approach advocated by William Spady and frequently adopted into state OBE packages: the emphasis on choosing broad outcomes that will prepare students for life after schooling, and the belief that all students can achieve at high levels.

The emphasis on choosing "outcomes of significance" (Spady, 1994) for later life often results in the composition of outcomes that are so broad and nebulous as to make it difficult to determine precisely what students will be taught and how student progress toward the outcomes will be measured (Manno, 1994; Olson, 1993). In addition, because the outcomes are designed to prepare students for all facets of adult life, outcomes often go beyond traditional academic goals and cover such areas such as self-esteem, tolerance, working in groups, and citizenship. Manno (1994) provides examples of broad, difficult-to-measure, and value-laden outcomes that appeared in early drafts of OBE proposals in Pennsylvania and Minnesota:

Pennsylvania: All students advocate the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage and traditions, including works of art,

presentations and performances in the local and global community as a function of good citizenship.

Minnesota: [The student] applies informed decision-making processes to promote healthy lifestyles, social well-being, and stewardship of the environment.

In Kentucky, the original set of outcomes distributed to schools included the following (Kentucky Department of Education, 1993):

- Students demonstrate the ability to make decisions based on ethical values.
- Students demonstrate an understanding of, appreciation for, and sensitivity to a multicultural and world view.
- Students demonstrate an open mind to alternative perspectives.

Not only do many conservative groups object to the teaching of what they view as "liberal values," but they charge that the states are programming students to have a liberal world view because students will be required to demonstrate the outcomes before they can graduate (Olson, 1993). While nearly all states that have adopted an OBE system continue to mandate Carnegie units as the basis for high school graduation, OBE critics fear that high school graduation under OBE will soon become contingent upon the mastery of outcomes (O'Neil, 1993). Opposition groups advocate curricular requirements rather than student outcome requirements because they believe that requiring students to think or believe any specific thing is inherently undemocratic (Fritz, 1994).

A second major concern of OBE critics is that the focus on helping all students achieve high standards will result in a "dumbing down" of the curriculum, as high-achieving students are held back while teachers work with

students who are struggling (Brandt, 1994; Frahm, 1994; Posner, 1993).

These and other objections to OBE have been voiced strongly and clearly by a number of organized groups in various states across the nation. Among the most active, nationally-based groups in the battle against OBE are the Christian Coalition, Citizens for Excellence in Education, Concerned Women for America, Eagle Forum, and Focus on the Family (Arocha, 1993; Harp, 1994; Olson, 1993; Pitsch, 1994; Pliska & McQuaide, 1994; Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, undated). Other groups and individuals have also joined in the protest against OBE. For instance, teacher unions in Alabama, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania have opposed their state's OBE plans (Frahm, 1994; Harp, 1994; Pliska & McQuaide, 1994). Also, parents from Connecticut's wealthiest suburbs, where schools have historically been well-financed and relatively successful, joined conservative groups in opposing Connecticut's reform plan (Frahm, 1994; Pipho, 1994).

A recent report by Public Agenda (1994) provides some indication of how broad-based is the opposition to OBE. The national telephone survey on which this report was based revealed that over half of respondents advocated an emphasis on "the basics" of reading, writing, and math; and supported higher academic standards. The majority supported the concept of OBE, but were uncomfortable with many of the new instructional methods associated with OBE -- such as an emphasis on math problem-solving over basic computation, an emphasis on writing content rather than spelling and grammar, and heterogenous grouping of students. Regarding the teaching of values, an overwhelming majority believed schools should teach the values of honesty, racial and ethnic tolerance, and non-violent problem-solving. Thus, while the organized opposition to OBE appears to agree with a cross-section of the population on

issues related to academics, the level of agreement on the values that should be taught in schools is not so clear.

The backlash against OBE has had a marked effect on state's efforts to implement OBE systems. Since 1992, states such as Connecticut, Georgia, Minnesota, Washington, and Virginia have delayed or abandoned their OBE plans, and Kentucky and Pennsylvania have altered their original outcomes in response to concerns expressed by opposition groups (Frahm, 1994; Koklanaris & Kellman, 1993; Manno, 1994; Olson, 1993; O'Neil, 1994; Pliska & McQuaide, 1994).

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY

Background

The Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) undertook a qualitative study of KERA implementation in four rural school districts at the start of the 1991-92 school year. The study is ongoing through the 1994-95 school year. The intent of the study is to document and inform policymakers, practitioners, and researchers about how state-mandated, large-scale restructuring plays out in local school districts. The study districts were selected to reflect a range of geographic, economic, and demographic conditions. One district is located in western Kentucky, one is in central Kentucky, and two are in eastern Kentucky. Three are county districts, and one is a small, independent district located within the boundaries of a larger, county district. The districts have been assigned pseudonyms to protect their anonymity: Lamont County, Newtown Independent District, Orange County, and Vanderbilt County.

Methods

The AEL research team has been an ongoing and regular presence in the four study districts since the 1991-92 school year. The chief research techniques are observation, interviews, and document review. While the initial research plan included five aspects of KERA, the plan was broadened in 1993-94 to include the anti-KERA movement because this movement was becoming a force in some of the districts. Data on the anti-KERA movement were gathered from interviews with district superintendents, school principals, teachers, parents, and key local leaders in the anti-KERA movement. In addition, school-based decision-making council meetings were observed on a semi-regular basis, along with at least two school board meetings per year. Key meetings of local organizations leading the charge against KERA were also observed.

At the state level, researchers have attended all meetings of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education since 1992-93. Two key officials at the Kentucky Department of Education were interviewed, as were state-level leaders of the three most visible opposition groups. Occasional meetings of legislative committees were observed. Key documents from both the state department of education and from the opposition groups were reviewed.

Research Focus

This paper seeks to answer the following questions:

(1) What is the nature of the opposition to school restructuring in Kentucky?

(2) What are the major objections?

(3) What effects has the movement had on school restructuring?

All three questions will be considered from both a state and local

perspective. The nature and effects of the anti-restructuring movement at the local level are particularly critical because the vast majority of literature on the topic of the opposition to OBE has focused on national and state-level activities and effects. We located scant literature on how the movement is playing out at the local level.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

State-Level Opposition to OBE

Chronology and Nature of the Anti-KERA Movement

In 1990, the Kentucky General Assembly enacted the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA)--a massive educational restructuring program developed by the legislature in response to a state supreme court ruling that the entire educational system was unconstitutional. The legislature hired consultants from outside the state to help craft a restructured system of public schools. The resulting "curriculum" portion of KERA, which contained the substance of instructional and curricular changes that would be expected of schools, included components of nearly every major restructuring proposal that appeared in the late 1980s: focus on student outcomes, performance-based assessment tied to a high-stakes accountability program, school-based decision making, a non-graded primary program, and integrated services centers at schools with significant proportions of at-risk students (Kannapel, 1991).

While some Kentucky Department of Education Officials have recently stated that KERA is not an OBE reform program, the OBE nature of KERA was stated outright in the early stages of reform. Consultant David Hornbeck, in recommendations that were adopted by the legislative Task Force on Education Reform, described his proposal as a "high expectation, outcome based,

consequences-driven, site-based shared decision making system" (Hornbeck, 1990, p. 36).

Most sources agree that opposition to KERA developed early on, even as the law was being formulated. Some of the current leaders in the anti-KERA movement became associated with one another through a conservative group that was formed prior to the passage of KERA entitled Parents and Citizens for Educational Responsibility (PACER). After the passage of KERA, PACER began to focus its efforts on KERA, but the organization has since become inactive. However, a leading member of PACER formed a new group to oppose KERA in 1990, entitled Parents and Professionals Involved in Education (PPIE). The president of PPIE reported in early 1995 that the organization has about 900 dues-paying subscribers.

The opposition to KERA did not become widespread and visible until 1993, with the greatest activity occurring during the 1993-94 school year. Numerous anti-KERA meetings were held in the western part of the state in the summer and fall of 1993, many of them organized by a conservative minister. Smaller opposition groups began to spring up, mostly in the rural, agricultural, western part of the state, but with some organized groups in suburban northern Kentucky around the Cincinnati, Ohio area, and in the some of the counties just east of Louisville.

While PPIE was initially viewed as the most active organized group leading the charge against KERA, other groups were also involved and came to the fore during this time period. Most notable among these were the Kentucky chapter of the Eagle Forum and an organization formed in Lexington, KY in 1989 entitled The Family Foundation. The president of the Eagle Forum declined to say how many Kentucky members the Forum has, stating that she was more

concerned about influence than numbers. Staff at The Family Foundation report that the Foundation is a non-profit organization that relies on donations for its funding, and has no membership category. Staff also report that, while the organization is not directly affiliated with any national groups, they work closely with such national groups as Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council, and the Heritage Foundation.

According to leaders of the opposition movement, cancellation of the state spelling bee in 1993 was a watershed event that brought media attention to their cause. The sponsors of the event explained that spelling bees were not in keeping with KERA goals and strategies. Media attention to the cancellation resulted in some public outrage that KERA had brought an end to a traditional competition that emphasized "basic skills."

In the view of some pro-KERA sources, the opposition movement peaked in January 1994, when a "Rally for Academic Priorities" was held in Frankfort near the beginning of the 1994 legislative session. The impact of the rally was somewhat diffused by an announcement by Education Commissioner Thomas Boysen two days prior in which he proposed some "mid-course adjustments" to KERA that partially addressed public concerns about the law.

During the spring of 1994, the adversarial relationship between the state and the anti-KERA forces abated somewhat, as the state department began to routinely invite anti-KERA leaders to serve on committees and advisory groups dealing with such tasks as revising the outcomes, previewing the state assessment, and revising curriculum guides. Even so, the movement has remained active. In October, 1994, several organizations leading the charge against KERA formed a coalition entitled "Campaign for Academic Renewal in Education" (CARE). The coalition is gearing up to make its voice heard during

the 1996 legislative session.

Throughout the organized campaign against KERA, the opposition movement has been led by a core of about five persons associated with PPIE, the Eagle Forum, and the Family Foundation. Leaders of these groups have, over the past several years, networked with anti-OBE leaders from other states--most notably, Peg Luksik from Pennsylvania. An opposition leader in Kentucky described Luksik's influence on the anti-KERA movement:

> Peggy is the one that kind of opened things up on outcome-based education as far as introducing it to a lot of us. That was the first person I heard it from. We have done a lot of research ourselves since then.

A videotape of Luksik decrying OBE and associating it with mastery learning was widely circulated around the state during the 1993-94 school year. Kentucky opposition leaders have also offered assistance to anti-OBE forces in other states, such as Alabama (Harp, 1994).

The anti-KERA movement in Kentucky has remained most active in western and northern Kentucky. The movement has had limited influence in central Kentucky and urban areas, and has failed to take hold in the Appalachian school districts of eastern Kentucky.

Objections to KERA

Objections to KERA voiced by the organized opposition have changed somewhat in substance since the movement began. In the early stages, the most vocal opponents focused on the "values" question, asserting that KERA was designed to teach politically correct values and in so doing, to take control of children away from families. Opponents were especially vocal in their

objection to family resource and youth services centers--a component of KERA in which social services centers are placed in or near schools to help students and families overcome physical, mental, emotional, and social barriers to learning. Some of the more provocative charges leveled at that time--mostly by conservative religious leaders--were that KERA was designed to teach homosexuality, witchcraft, and mind control.

As opposition leaders became better informed and networked with national anti-OBE leaders, however, the movement changed in tone. Leaders of the Eagle Forum and The Family Foundation took center stage in changing the focus to academics. While they continued to assert that KERA is value-laden, they began to focus most of their arguments on the charge that the reform law is essentially non-academic. A leader of the opposition movement described how the movement evolved:

> There has been an evolution in the things that we have been concerned about, because we didn't know what outcomes-based education was in the beginning. We didn't understand performance-based assessment initially. In the beginning, the things we were concerned about were the centers. I was concerned about the ungraded system because I was very familiar with it. We were concerned about accountability. But they didn't release those outcomes for a long time. Until we saw those, things were more general.

Other objections voiced by KERA opponents include the charge that KERA removes local control from schools with its top-down mandates and high-stakes accountability system, as well as the creation of school-based decision making councils that do not always have to answer to local school boards; that the

state testing program is not reliable or valid, nor does it provide useful information about how students are doing; and that the technology program contained in KERA will result in the state maintaining computer data banks on students that include personal and attitudinal information.

Underlying the objections held by the most conservative groups is a basic philosophical view that schools should be used to pass on the culture, not to transform society. One of the state leaders of the opposition movement explained:

> One of the primary roles of the school is to pass on the culture. In my mind, KERA is completely deficient in that, utterly deficient... They're not teaching the culture that has come down to us over the thousands of years. A lot of parents still do not understand until you explain it the whole issue of the western moral heritage. I'm not a conspiracy theorist... but I do think that ideas have a genealogy and ideas have consequences. I think the consequence of the kind of secularism--you look at the academic left and you see this desire to revise history or, in many cases, to use history as a political tool... The kinds of things that you <u>don't</u> see in KERA are the result of this whole view of the world that many people in academia have: that cultural heritage is not an important thing to pass on to children, and that in many cases, the western moral tradition is in some sense racist and sexist.

The CARE coalition that was organized in the fall of 1994 has developed and publicized a "Five-Point Plan," which leaders of the coalition hope to introduce as some form of legislation in 1996. The plan proposes the

following revisions to KERA:

(1) Strengthen academic rigor by enacting standards that emphasize academic content and basic skills.

(2) Improve state testing by replacing the state's controversial tests with reliable tests that tell parents how their children are doing.

(3) Allow for greater local control by limiting the power of state bureaucrats (such as the State Board of Education).

(4) Make the nongraded primary program voluntary.

(5) Protect the privacy of students and their families by placing limitations on information stored in state computer banks.

In many ways, these five points illustrate a shift by the opposition movement toward the political center. A state department of education official, as well as a Prichard Committee spokesperson, expressed agreement with at least some of the five points. Also, as shall be discussed in the sections on local district findings later in this paper, some of the five points reflect broad-based concerns that have been expressed even by those who are not involved in the organized movement against KERA.

Effects of the Anti-KERA Movement

The anti-KERA movement appears to have had a greater effect at the state level than the local level. In late 1993, both the Kentucky Department of Education and the Prichard Committee launched a campaign to counteract information being disseminated by anti-KERA groups. Both organizations sent letters to editors of all Kentucky newspapers pointing out inaccuracies in guest editorials being submitted by anti-KERA leaders. The Partnership for Kentucky School Reform, an organization of business leaders affiliated with

the Prichard Committee, sent letters to all state legislators affirming its support for KERA. The Partnership also placed advertisements in newspapers in an attempt to counter charges made by the opposition movement, and conducted opinion polling to determine how the majority of Kentuckians feel about KERA.

A Kentucky Department of Education official reported that, after talking with education officials in other states who had dealt with anti-OBE movements, the Department adopted a strategy of talking with individuals and groups about their concerns, but NOT engaging in public debate about KERA. In addition, the state department made some effort to distance itself from William Spady's brand of OBE. The Department changed the title of its original 75 "valued outcomes" for students to "learner outcomes" and later, according to some, to "learner standards," and finally, to "academic expectations."

In December 1993, the state department disseminated revisions to its curriculum framework, Transformations. The revisions included the deletion of references to alcohol, smoking, values, family tree activities, specific interest groups, and religion. Other revisions included moving sex education activities from the middle school section to the high school section, and replacing an activity on contraception with an activity stressing refusal skills.

In January 1994, just prior to the statewide rally sponsored by the opposition movement, Education Commissioner Thomas Boysen, at the urging of the legislature, proposed a set of "mid-course adjustments" to KERA. The proposed adjustments included a delay in the most severe sanctions to schools that did not make the required improvement toward meeting KERA goals, as well as a recommendation that the outcomes for student self-sufficiency and

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responsible group membership (KERA Goals 3 and 4) be excluded from the testing program. Commissioner Boysen also asked the State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education to revise the 75 "valued outcomes" in order to clarify their meaning and make sure the outcomes were academic in orientation. In response to these proposals, legislation was passed in 1994 prohibiting the state from testing students on the KERA goals related to self-sufficiency and responsible group membership, and delaying the imposition of the most severe sanctions on schools.

In May 1994, the State Board of Education approved revision of the 75 "valued outcomes" into 57 "academic expectations." Leaders of the opposition movement were invited to give input into the revisions. The final revision of the outcomes involved clarifying and simplifying language; eliminating all the outcomes that had been listed under KERA Goals 3 and 4; deleting references to working in a group, working on one's own, and living in a diverse society; and deleting the terms "emotions," "feelings," "evolution," and "environment" (Kentucky Department of Education, 1994).

For the most part, revision of the outcomes served the purpose of making them more academic and less value-laden. Even so, opponents of KERA continued to object that the outcomes were not academic enough, and also were not specific or measurable. The opposition movement launched an intense campaign to defeat approval of the academic expectations regulation by the legislative Administrative Regulations Review Subcommittee. The Department of Education successfully postponed the committee hearing on this regulation until after the November 1994 elections, at which time the regulation was approved by a narrow 4-3 margin. The Learning Goals of KERA, along with the original and revised outcomes are provided in Appendix A.

Since that time, leaders of the opposition movement have been invited by the state department to give input on many matters that are of concern to them. For instance, opposition leaders have served on assessment advisory committees and assisted in the revision of the state curriculum guide for character education.

In spite of the increased involvement of anti-KERA leaders in state-level educational matters, the leaders we spoke to were of the unanimous opinion that the state has not done enough to address their concerns. They agreed that the revision of the outcomes was not substantive. They were not convinced that the state will refrain from teaching and testing values, even though Goals 3 and 4 have been removed from the testing program. Some leaders also expressed doubt about the sincerity of some Kentucky Department of Education officials in obtaining input from the opposition.

Opposition to OBE at the Local Level

The chronology and geography of the anti-KERA movement in the four study districts closely mirrors that of state-level happenings. We began to hear about organized opposition to KERA early in the 1993-94 school year in the western and central Kentucky districts of Lamont County and Vanderbilt County. There was no similar opposition in either of the eastern Kentucky districts, nor has any organized opposition sprung up in those districts to date. A few anti-KERA articles and cartoons submitted by former teachers from the two eastern Kentucky districts have appeared in local newspapers, along with occasional letters to the editor written by people from outside the area. Many of the people we have asked about the movement in our eastern Kentucky school districts, however, are largely unfamiliar with the movement except for

reading an occasional newspaper article on the topic.

In spite of the regional nature of the organized opposition to KERA, we have heard some common complaints about KERA across all four districts that have come from both members of the organized opposition and from those who are not involved in the formal movement. We will discuss these common issues first, and then examine how the organized opposition developed in and affected the school districts of Lamont and Vanderbilt County.

Common Objections to KERA

In all four districts in our study, we have heard four key concerns expressed about KERA: (1) fear of the loss of academics; (2) skepticism about the philosophy that all children can learn at high levels, and fears that working toward this goal will result in a "dumbing down" of the curriculum; (3) concerns about the nongraded primary program; and (4) questions about the reliability and validity of the state performance-based assessment and accountability program (known as the Kentucky Instructional Results Information System, or KIRIS). The level of concern and the frequency with which we hear these concerns seems to have been on the rise in the past year.

Since the time this study began, both educators and parents, including those who have not been much influenced by nor involved with the anti-KERA movement, have expressed concern that KERA may lead to a loss of basic skills instruction. Parents and teachers alike insist that they can see evidence that children are not learning some important, prerequisite skills. While the majority of these people have not become involved in any organized opposition to KERA, this is one area in which the formal opposition and the average concerned parent and citizen may find some common ground.

Likewise, there has been some skepticism from the start in all four districts about the underlying KERA philosophy that all can learn at high levels. Many parents and teachers express concern that, as teachers struggle to bring the lowest children up to the "proficient" level on the state assessment, brighter students will be left unchallenged. Again, here is another area of common ground between the formal opposition and the average parent and citizen.

Two additional areas of concern about KERA have emerged in the past two years from both the opposition movement and from other sources: the nongraded primary program and the assessment/accountability program. Concerns about the primary program are related to the two concerns mentioned above: loss of basics and "dumbing down." Some parents and teachers fear that mixing students of different ages and abilities will make it difficult to meet the needs of all, and that new instructional approaches common to the primary program will result in students not learning prerequisite skills.

Many educators, parents, and citizens are also concerned about using an unproven assessment tool to make judgments about schools. In addition, parents and educators are confused about the assessment because it measures school, not student, progress. They have difficulty understanding the usefulness of a test that does not provide reliable data on individual student performance. We have heard some reports in each district from parents or teachers who report that some of their best students scored poorly on the state assessment, while students who have not done well in school scored at the highest levels. Parents and educators question the credibility of an instrument that provides such seemingly contradictory information.

Lamont County

Chronology and nature of the movement. Reflecting events statewide, our western Kentucky district has been the most active in terms of organized opposition to KERA. We began hearing of organized opposition to KERA in Lamont County in the fall of 1993. At that time, a few concerned parents in the school district began attending KERA-related meetings in other counties to obtain information. Around October 1993, the Peg Luksik videotape began circulating in Lamont County. Among the parents who had become concerned about KERA at that time were four parent council members serving on three different school-based decisionmaking (SBDM) councils in the district. These parents apparently ran for the councils out of interest and concern for the schools rather than with an agenda to obstruct KERA. It appeared that their involvement with the anti-KERA movement occurred primarily after being elected to the councils.

In November 1993, one of these parents became frustrated by what he perceived as a lack of good answers about KERA after attending a state-level conference on KERA sponsored by the Prichard Committee. He called a meeting among parents to discuss concerns about KERA, and invited a speaker from an anti-KERA group in another county. After this meeting, the Lamont County parents formed their own organization. The president of the organization states that the group's purpose is to "reform educational reform."

From December 1993 through May 1994, the local anti-KERA organization in Lamont County was highly visible through its sponsorship of three meetings to inform the public about KERA, and through numerous letters to the editor in the local newspaper. The letters were consistently negative about nearly every aspect of KERA. The majority of these letters were written by two key

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leaders in the local organization. Attendance at the anti-KERA meeting we attended was 32 people. About 40 people attended a meeting with legislators sponsored by the local Chamber of Commerce. Many of those in attendance spoke against KERA.

Those members of the local anti-KERA organization who were also on SBDM councils occasionally distributed anti-KERA materials at council meetings. These parents were to our observation, however, consistently constructive in their involvement on school councils, especially in promoting parent involvement and in attempting to improve conditions in the schools. For example, although suspicious of the state assessment program, they actively initiated and supported school efforts to improve test scores.

With the exception of a candidates' forum prior to the November 1994 elections, the local opposition group has not met during the 1994-95 school year. There were, however, at least seven letters in the local newspaper from July through December 1994. Five of those letters were written by one of the leaders of the opposition group. The president of the group reported in February, 1995, that the group has about 12 active members, and that they are saving their energy for the 1996 legislative session.

Objections to KERA. In Lamont County, a variety of objections to KERA have been expressed. These include the four common objections discussed in a previous section (e.g., loss of focus on academics, "dumbing down" of the curriculum in order to ensure that all achieve, concerns about the primary program, and skepticism about the KIRIS assessment). In addition, many Lamont County sources expressed concern about the teaching of liberal values and the loss of local control through state mandates and loss of school board powers.

The liberal values that are most feared are: (1) the teaching of

acceptance of alternative lifestyles--homosexuality, primarily; (2) the emphasis on group or team work, which is viewed as a move away from individuality and competition and toward communism or socialism; and (3) teaching "politically correct" positions on key issues.

Individuals in Lamont County who object to the teaching of liberal values have cited specific examples of objectionable curricular and instructional practices in the local schools. These activities include group work, de-emphasis on competition, and a "politically correct" environmental curriculum. Interestingly, the people we have spoken to do not tend to blame local teachers for these teaching practices, but focus their anger at a perceived mandate by the state to teach in these ways. Local sources also report hearing stories about the teaching and testing of values in other states, and they worry that Kentucky will soon follow suit.

Effects of the anti-KERA movement. In Lamont County, even though the anti-KERA movement has been organized, visible, and vocal, it does not appear to have had a major effect on local schools. Anti-KERA sentiment was expressed frequently at council meetings by parent council members who were active in the movement, as well as by other council members. Almost without exception, however, the anti-KERA sentiment expressed at council meetings was directed toward the state rather than toward local schools. Also, remarks made by parent council members were typically designed to express global fears and share information they had heard elsewhere, and were not intended to result in council or school action of any kind.

At times, parents involved in the anti-KERA movement behaved in a contradictory manner, perhaps due to the contradiction between their distrust of the state and their concern for local schools. For example, at a November

1993 council meeting at a Lamont County school, a parent council member who served as president of the local anti-KERA movement distributed anti-OBE literature prior to the meeting. He had previously expressed fears during an individual interview that the state assessment was already or would soon amount to psychological testing of students. When the council began discussing the upcoming KIRIS assessment, however, this same parent was very vocal in suggesting strategies the school should employ to help students do well on the assessment. Some of his remarks illustrate this point:

> We want to make sure as a council that we are doing everything possible to enhance our assessment scores, correct? If there are ways we can enhance that by the way we schedule certain situations, classroom time; if we have better expertise in certain areas, then we need to be using those people in those areas to enhance those scores--making sure we have the right people for the right jobs.

Some Lamont County parents considered exempting their children from the KIRIS assessment in 1993-94. Even though school officials strongly feared that parents would follow through on this, their tactics for encouraging parents to allow their children to take the test did not center around defending the worth of the test itself. One principal, for instance, implied at a council meeting that children who did not take the assessment could not be considered for the gifted program because the assessment results would partially determine eligibility for the program. Another principal, rather than defending the assessment, focused on the fact that exempting children from the assessment would harm the school. When a parent council member raised the issue of exempting students at a council meeting, the principal

replied:

> First off, I have not been approached by anybody wanting to opt out. Second, if they do, I would hope they would give me 15 minutes in the office to talk to them. We make a complete zero when they do that. If we have people opt out, it's really going to hurt us. I guess what I'm saying is, the kind of people we have at [this school], I'm sure we're not going to have any of that. I certainly hope we don't; If we do have a request, I would like to talk to those people just from the standpoint I want them to understand how it affects our school as a whole, not just from their standpoint.

Eventually, parents at one school were allowed to preview the assessment. All parents who previewed the assessment subsequently allowed their children to take the test. In the end, no students in Lamont County requested exemptions from KIRIS in 1993-94.

The organized opposition to KERA in Lamont County appeared to die down in the latter half of the 1993-94 school year. Although the formal organization remained intact and sponsored a few meetings, some initial activists in the movement lost enthusiasm because they felt they had been misinformed, or when they saw no link between the accusations they were hearing and what was going on in local schools. The remarks of a parent council member in the fall of 1993 and again in the spring of 1994 illustrate his disenchantment with the movement. In the fall of 1993, he shared a story at a council meeting about a test item from another, unnamed state in which students were reportedly supposed to respond that they should go with their friends if the friends chose to rob a store. He expressed fear about the

potential for similar problems in Kentucky:

> Not that I believe in it. You've got your radicals on both sides and what you try to do is hear everything and come up with a decent opinion on it. But it's enough to open your eyes some, and it's scary -- some of the things where you see there might be a potential tie-in.

In a spring 1994 interview, however, this same parent--having investigated some of the allegations--distanced himself from the anti-KERA movement:

> I think the fervor has slowed down; I think it [the anti-KERA movement] has just about peaked.... I think it has gotten to the point now where the strong anti-KERA groups bring people in to speak that so discredit [the movement] and just really make an ass of themselves that they lose their own credibility... I hope what happens is that the people at the grass roots level who are objecting to it do exactly what Boysen and the others have done in Frankfort, and that is to have the two sides say, "This is good, This is not good" -- and you do it that way.

We also heard from parents in Lamont County who were generally supportive of KERA. For instance, in a group interview with randomly-selected parents from one school in the fall of 1994, none of the rhetoric of the anti-KERA movement came up until the end of the meeting, when one of the parents mentioned that a co-worker in a neighboring county had been concerned about the teaching of values in schools. Two parents in this interview were highly supportive of KERA, particularly the nongraded primary program.

Another example of parental support for new teaching practices came in

an informal conversation with two parents after a meeting with legislators at which KERA was lambasted by many in the audience. One parent spoke highly of the critical thinking abilities his son had demonstrated since the passage of KERA. Another man said he would like for his children to be educated about such things as alternative lifestyles!

> I don't necessarily want a teacher to tell a child of mine that homosexuality is right or that it's wrong. What I do want them to know is that there are homosexuals, homosexuality exists, that it is an issue with much debate, and to just acknowledge what is happening in the world, acknowledge history... Things that happen, happen -- just because they violate your particular value system doesn't mean that their existence should be denied.

A parent who was not involved with the anti-KERA movement expressed general support for KERA, and explained why she had not attended any of the informational meetings organized by the movement:

> I probably should [go], but I tell you what it is like. It's something I don't feel like you can argue with. It's like arguing religion with somebody. You know, when they put all this stuff to you and I just keep saying, "Well, where did that come from? Who told you that that's the way it is?" I'm wondering if somebody else somewhere has an agenda and are kind of manipulating these people.

Information supplied by the central office indicates that 7-8 Lamont County students were home-schooled from 1991 through 1994. In 1994-95, 10 students are home-schooled. Of this number, four students apparently went to home schooling because of a Kentucky law that requires students to make

passing grades in order to obtain a driver's license. Sources at the central office reported that these four students were not making passing grades and were pulled out to home schools so that their grades could improve and they could obtain driver's licenses. A fifth student moved to home schooling after getting married. The central office has records of five Lamont County students attending private schools in 1994-95, up from two in 1992-93 and 1993-94. The number of students in home or private schools in Lamont County accounts for about one percent of total enrollment. These numbers have not increased substantially since the passage of KERA.

Thus, the organized opposition group in Lamont County does not appear to represent the views of all parents, nor has it had a strong enough effect to result in many parents removing their children from public schools. In addition, the opposition group seems to less active in 1994-95 than it was in 1993-94, although it is still in place and has a few active members. There do not appear to have been any effects of the movement on local schools.

It is possible that the anti-KERA movement in Lamont County might have been defused more quickly if Lamont County educators had been able to be more open with parents and more supportive of KERA in the initial stages. In Lamont County, both educators and citizens have, from the start, been less supportive of KERA than those in some of our other districts. A contributing factor to this attitude may be that KERA did not produce nearly the amount of new state funding for Lamont County as it did for many other districts in the state, largely because the district has low numbers of at-risk pupils coupled with high property values. In addition, local farmers and other citizens strongly resisted local tax increases that were required under KERA if the district was to receive substantial matching dollars from the state. Although

the school board eventually raised taxes to the highest level possible without a referendum, this did not occur until recently, so the district did not initially benefit from KERA as it might have.

Consequently, funding for teacher training was woefully inadequate in the early years of KERA. Teachers have only recently begun to receive the training they need to understand and implement new instructional practices. When coupled with a somewhat negative attitude about the KERA funding measures and also about the top-down nature of KERA, Lamont County educators have been much less inclined to defend KERA. When confronted with parents who have questions or are upset about instructional and assessment practices associated with KERA, Lamont County educators have often taken the approach of saying, "The state made us do it." A story told by one Lamont County principal at a council meeting illustrates this point:

> Last week, Ms. [a math teacher] and I met with a parent over a math problem. The problem was an open-ended question. It wasn't very long, but it did require several pages of work. [The teacher] went over this problem two or three days in advance on the board, and then the students were to do it. But a parent came in and didn't like this type of math being taught. So [the teacher] pulls out this curriculum framework book that they've given us and this question is directly from the state[1]... This lady after we talked to her was very receptive, not toward KERA but toward what we are trying to do... We told this parent, "We're forced into it."

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[1]The state curriculum framework is not mandatory, but is available to schools to use as a guide.

As the council proceeded to discuss this event, the teacher herself eventually came around to defending the math problem as a worthwhile activity. Typically, the first line of defense in Lamont County, however, was to direct parent anger toward the state rather than to explain the value of KERA.

Vanderbilt County

As in Lamont County, we first became aware of organized opposition to KERA in the central Kentucky district of Vanderbilt County in the fall of 1993. At that time, a member of a local church who was active in the PPIE organization at the state level organized a series of meetings at the church to inform people about the harmful effects of KERA. The organizer reported that she asked to hold the meetings at the church after a number of local parents and teachers approached her with concerns about KERA. Reportedly, 60-80 people attended the first two meetings, and 10-15 people were present at the third meeting. Among the activities at these meetings was viewing of the Pennsylvania videotape featuring Peg Luksik.

The chief concern voiced by Vanderbilt County parents we spoke to after the anti-KERA meetings were held was that KERA promotes the teaching of liberal values, such as acceptance of alternative lifestyles, euthanasia, and socialistic views of the world. A principal reported that, during the time the anti-KERA meetings were being held, she received two to four calls daily from parents concerned that values were being taught in the classroom. In the spring of 1994, she described how the anti-KERA climate had damaged trust between the school and the community:

> I think it has hurt us some because now they don't trust us as much. It's going to take awhile to build that trust up again.

We have really worked hard at it just by taking time to answer questions, to talk to them, to show them what we're doing in the classroom... And we tell them, "It's not perfect; we're not trying to defend a perfect system, but it's better than it used to be."

Generally, parents and anti-KERA leaders we spoke to reported that their fears about the teaching of liberal values did not spring from anything that occurred in Vanderbilt County schools. The minister at the church where the meetings were held emphasized that the meetings were not about anything objectionable that was occurring in local schools. Rather, the meetings were designed to alert parents to the value-laden nature of state goals and outcomes. In addition, some parents and community leaders had heard reports of values being taught or tested in other states with similar reform laws, or even in other, nameless school districts in Kentucky, and they feared that the same thing might eventually happen in Vanderbilt County. Parents were also concerned that the state assessment program contained some value-laden questions. Parental concern about values being taught and tested through KERA appeared to be confined largely to the county seat in Vanderbilt County.

School district educators appeared to successfully allay some parental concerns by adopting an attitude of openness and by being generally supportive of KERA. In contrast to Lamont County, educators in Vanderbilt County appeared more inclined to reassure parents that KERA and the assessment program were a worthwhile endeavor. For example, a small group of parents at both the central elementary school and the high school considered exempting their children from the state assessment program. The elementary school principal, who is an enthusiastic supporter of KERA, reported that parents at

her school agreed to allow their children to participate in the assessment after she had talked with them and attempted to allay their concerns.

At the high school, a group of seven or eight parents were allowed to preview the KIRIS test. After the previewing, all but one set of parents allowed their children to take the test. The parents who refused did allow their eighth-grade child to take the test, but did not permit their high school children to participate because they felt the test was very negative in tone. One of the parents explained:

> After looking at the high school test, the stories and the articles that were in this particular test were all negative. There was not a happy story, there was not a story with any type of a positive anything in it... Why do our children have to relate to something that's negative all the time?

With the exception of this parent and another parent at the high school who exempted her child for reasons unknown to school officials, no parents in the district asked that their children be exempted from taking the state test in 1993-94.

Another factor that may have played a role in alleviating some of the early tension about KERA was that the minister of the church where the anti-KERA meetings were held was among those parents who previewed the KIRIS test in 1993-94. He reported that, while he was not happy with every item on the test, he did not find the test offensive enough at that time to exempt his children from taking it. He even told the high school principal to have concerned parents call him for reassurance about the test. Also, upon learning that some parents were calling the schools because they feared the schools were teaching inappropriate values, the minister reassured parents at

the next anti-KERA meeting that none of the identified problems were occurring in Vanderbilt County.

Since the 1993-94 school year, there has been virtually no organized anti-KERA activity in Vanderbilt County. Unlike Lamont County, there has been little in the local newspaper to suggest that any organized movement is afoot to oppose KERA. With the exception of an editorial by a local legislator and two letters to the editor from outside the area, the newspaper has been devoid of evidence that opposition to KERA is fomenting in the district.

The minister at the church where the meetings were held stated that revisions by the state department to the "outcomes" and the curriculum framework were largely responsible for the tapering off of organized anti-KERA activity at his church. He explained that, while he and other parents continue to have concerns about KERA, many of their concerns about the teaching and testing of values were somewhat allayed by the state's removal of value-laden outcomes and activities from state regulations and documents. Now that the major objections to KERA center mostly on academics rather than values and morals, he does not believe the church is an appropriate forum for airing concerns about KERA.

Generally, strong anti-KERA sentiment in Vanderbilt County appears to have been concentrated among a very few people, and has failed to catch fire. Interviews with parents and teachers throughout the 1993-94 and 1994-95 school year suggest that few people have been affected or influenced by the movement. For instance, elections of parent members to SBDM councils were observed at the two central schools in the spring of 1994. No mention was made of objections to KERA during these elections, and several candidates voiced their support for KERA. Parent council members that we interviewed generally

expressed confidence that the allegations made by the anti-KERA movement do not hold true for Vanderbilt County. One parent council member explained:

> I have looked for [objectionable activities in local schools] because of all the controversy that's going on about KERA. I've tried to find something that's really upsetting because they've talked about socialism and all of that. I've really looked for that and I don't see it... I have all the confidence in these teachers here that if there was something these kids should not be taught, they would jump straight up... If I thought the school was teaching homosexuality and some of the things that I've read in the newspaper that they were teaching in school, but like I said, I don't think these teachers out here would stand for it. I do have confidence in these teachers.

A parent focus group meeting was conducted in the fall of 1994 in Vanderbilt County. It included randomly selected parents from all schools in the district. Only one parent raised any objections to KERA that were reminiscent of the anti-KERA movement--a concern that students were being tested on values. Although the parent cited a particularly offensive test question, he was unable to identify the test from which the question was taken or when the item appeared. Other parents in the group said they had seen nothing occurring in local schools that made them fear that inappropriate values were being taught or tested.

Information obtained from the Vanderbilt County central office indicates that the number of home school units in the district has risen from five in 1989 to 23 units in 1994-95 serving 32 students. A central office administrator attributed the increase to the recent in-migration of members of

the Jehovah Witness faith--a phenomenon that occurred after the passage of KERA.

Vanderbilt County is also home to one parochial elementary school and to an Amish school. The principal of the parochial school reported that her school was at capacity even prior to KERA, primarily serving children of parishioners. She reported receiving only two or three phone calls since KERA passed from parents who were interested in transferring their children to the school because of concerns about KERA. In total, about 14 percent of Vanderbilt County school-aged children attend private or home schools. Although this number has increased slightly since KERA passed, the increase appears to be primarily due to religious reasons and not because of KERA.

It should be noted, however, that even though organized opposition to KERA has not emerged in Vanderbilt County, we have for the past three years heard many parents and educators express concerns about the four aspects of KERA that were listed in a previous section: loss of academics, fear of "dumbing down," the nongraded primary program, and the assessment program. In some cases, these concerns seem to have intensified over the past year. For instance, the majority of primary teachers whom we have spoken to in the district over the past year say that they would prefer to return to single-age grouping. Many parents and teachers have expressed fear that primary students are not learning basic skills.

Another example of increased concern is that the minister who was trying to keep an open mind about KERA when we spoke to him in 1993-94 had become less positive in 1994-95. He reported that he had become increasingly concerned about the KIRIS assessment after reading literature stating that there have been no studies that correlate KIRIS scores with such measures as

student grades in school and student performance on national, norm-referenced tests. He also questioned the objectivity of KIRIS scoring, and objected to the KIRIS "labeling" of students as "novice," "apprentice," "proficient," and "distinguished." He was also disturbed to learn that students do not have to answer correctly on the test to score well. Finally, he was concerned that teachers devote so much time to preparing students for the test that valuable instructional time is lost.

The minister's concerns about KIRIS were exacerbated in 1993-94 when one of his children, who was in the gifted program and making straight A's in school, scored at the "novice" level on some assessment components. The girl was disturbed by the assessment results, particularly when she learned that some of her classmates who were making poor grades in school had made higher scores on the assessment than she had. The minister stated that he will not allow either of his children to participate in the assessment this year because he is convinced that the instrument is neither reliable nor valid.

This same minister also reported that he is hearing more and more concerns from his parishioners about the loss of academics in the schools. He has been approached by several parents about forming a Christian school in the county. While he is not ready to make this move at this time, he feels some revisions to KERA must occur or he and other parents will be forced to remove their children from public schools. His foremost concerns about KERA are the loss of academics and the belief that the assessment is not reliable or valid.

DISCUSSION

Our study of the organized opposition to KERA has revealed that the movement has been more influential at the state level than in our four study

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districts. There has been no organized anti-KERA activity of any type in the two eastern Kentucky districts, nor did the opposition become organized in the central Kentucky district. The organized movement in the western Kentucky district has had no apparent effect on KERA implementation in local schools.

Parent concerns were initially aroused in Vanderbilt County and Lamont County about the teaching and testing of values. The level of concern dropped as many parents came to realize that the teaching of inappropriate values was not occurring in local schools, and there was no concrete evidence that such teaching had occurred on a widespread basis elsewhere in Kentucky.

In Vanderbilt County, the open attitude of educators toward parent concerns, coupled with a general attitude of support for KERA, seems to have gone a long way toward alleviating parental concerns. Even in Lamont County where educators were initially less supportive of KERA and less forthcoming with parents, some parents have become disenchanted with the organized anti-KERA movement because of perceived misinformation or lack of hard evidence for some of the allegations made by movement leaders. Thus, it appears that the formal movement against KERA may have reached a plateau in these districts.

This is not to say, however, that there is widespread support for KERA. Until recently, parents and educators have largely displayed a willingness to give KERA a chance, but concerns about certain aspects of KERA have been growing. Most commonly, we hear fears that the academic "basics" are not being taught, that instructional practices aimed at helping all achieve will leave the brightest students unchallenged, and that the assessment program is not reliable or valid enough to be used for high-stakes accountability. Many teachers of primary students are also beginning to express strong objection to multi-age classrooms, and some parents of primary students express fear that

the nongraded primary program will not provide students with essential basic skills.

These concerns are congruent with those of parents nationwide, according to the findings of the Public Agenda (1994) research, which was described earlier in this paper. Moreover, most of these concerns are also concerns of the anti-KERA movement, and are addressed in the Five-Point Plan now being espoused by the anti-KERA coalition. The fact that state leaders of the anti-KERA movement have, in recent months, focused their attack on academics and de-emphasized the values question may earn the opposition movement broader-based support.

Currently, however, state leaders of the organized opposition to KERA do not appear to be viewed by a broad cross-section of citizens in the study districts as their spokespersons when it comes to KERA. Many people that we spoke to have been turned off by the movement, possibly because attempts by opposition leaders to connect KERA with reform efforts in other states have led to confusion about what is really happening in Kentucky. While opposition leaders may have intended that activities such as viewing the Pennsylvania videotape would alert parents to the potential for problems with Kentucky's reform program, these connections with other states sometimes resulted in the mistaken perception by some that certain activities were occurring in Kentucky. When they realized this was not the case, some parents felt they had been misinformed, and became disillusioned with the opposition movement. Other parents have been skeptical about the opposition movement from the start because of what they viewed as outlandish accusations by some movement leaders, and because they saw no evidence locally that anything objectionable was happening.

Another factor to consider is the regional nature of the anti-KERA movement. There are several possible explanations as to why the opposition to KERA failed to take hold in eastern Kentucky. We can suggest only a few. Some researchers argue that the kinds of reforms contained in the curriculum section of KERA were designed to address the deficiencies of urban schools; specifically, to help eliminate low achievement and bring about higher graduation rates among at-risk students (Thomas & Martin, 1991). In Kentucky, problems of at-risk students are acute in the Appalachian areas of eastern Kentucky, as well as in urban schools districts. Student achievement in suburban and agricultural areas has historically been higher. Thus, citizens of these areas may have felt less need for KERA-like reforms than those in other areas of the state.

Along this same line, the "governance" section of KERA was designed to eliminate the political problems that were so prevalent in Appalachian school districts. Also, the funding equalization measures in the law benefitted Appalachian school districts in much greater proportions than in other sections of the state. Therefore, the entire reform act was, in many ways, targeted at improving the educational conditions of eastern Kentucky. While most advocates of reform would argue that KERA will benefit all school districts, citizens of many eastern Kentucky school districts certainly felt a stronger need for reform and thus, may have been more receptive to it.

Another possible reason that the movement failed to take hold in eastern Kentucky is that residents of Appalachian communities have traditionally been suspicious of formal organizations of any type (DeYoung, 1994). In addition, Appalachian school districts often employ more local residents than any other business or agency. Most people either work for the school system or are

related to someone who does. Such connections makes attacks on the school district more difficult than in districts where the school system is less influential (DeYoung, 1994).

CONCLUSION

In spite of some regional differences, the concerns listed above (e.g., loss of academic basics, lowering of standards, the accountability program, and the nongraded primary) have been expressed by some people in all four districts we are studying. State policymakers should be aware of the widespread concern about KERA in these key areas and should be open, as they have been in the past, to making adjustments to KERA. Such adjustments need to be made with caution, however, because KERA is still new; large-scale changes could interrupt a reform effort that has not yet had a chance to work. Even so, the law has been in place long enough that effects on students are becoming evident both through the assessment program and by observation. If public concerns should continue or become heightened in the areas outlined above--e.g., loss of the basics, lowering of standards, nongraded primary, and the accountability system--policymakers should keep an open mind to making adjustments in those areas.

Policymakers must also be prepared, however, to differentiate between concerns based on experience and evidence and concerns based on fear or lack of understanding about the unknown. Evidence gathered in the four study districts suggests that educators who have had the greatest opportunity for professional development about KERA were better equipped and more likely to explain and defend KERA than staff who had not received as much training. Parents relied heavily on local school district staff for their information.

Their fears about KERA appeared to be more successfully allayed when staff were able to explain the rationale behind and benefits of KERA than when staff deferred responsibility to the state. Thus, a continuing emphasis on professional development for educators--particularly on those most problematic components of KERA, and in districts that have not benefitted as greatly from KERA--may be the most successful tool in ensuring that KERA stays in place long enough to have a chance to work.

Another possible avenue for informing parents about KERA is to ensure that educators and parents at SBDM schools are trained more effectively. In Lamont County, many of the parents who served on SBDM councils simultaneously became involved in the anti-KERA movement. Rather than causing problems for the council, the parents' knowledge of KERA combined with their experiences on the council increased their understanding of their schools and of KERA. That understanding enabled them to make constructive suggestions for the implementation of KERA.

At most SBDM schools in both Lamont and Vanderbilt County, parent involvement through SBDM was primarily restricted to parent representatives on the council, either because committees were dominated by teachers or were inactive. Consequently, a very limited number of parents were given the opportunity to become better informed through involvement in SBDM. This suggests that training for SBDM councils should include a strong component on increasing parent involvement on councils, committees, and in schools as a whole in order to increase the understanding of KERA among a greater number of parents. More extensive involvement of parents on SBDM committees was initiated at one Lamont County school in 1994-95, but it is too soon to know if the increased involvement will result in greater support for KERA.

The findings from this study suggest that the organized opposition to KERA is not as broad-based as it might appear. The movement has been influential, however, perhaps because it has highlighted some areas of concern that are shared by many parents and educators around the state. These findings are congruent with those at the national level, as contained in the Public Agenda report. The implications of these findings for Kentucky policymakers are also relevant for policymakers in other states and nationally.

It is incumbent upon Kentucky policymakers to make sure that the public and local school officials are well-informed enough about KERA to understand what is happening in classrooms. At the same time, policymakers must be open to making further adjustments to KERA if research-based evidence suggests that students are not achieving at acceptable levels. Above all, it is important that the lines of communication be kept open between state policymakers, the opposition movement, and the public in general. Our research suggests that openness and mutual respect at both the state and local level has proven the most effective means of addressing the concerns of everyone.

Appendix A:
Kentucky's Learning Goals, Original Valued Outcomes, and Academic Expectations

Goal 1 - Students are able to use basic communication and mathematics skills for purposes and situations they will encounter throughout their lives.

Outcome/expectation

1.1 Old Students use research tools to **locate sources of information** and ideas relevant to a specific need or problem.

New Students use reference tools such as dictionaries, almanacs, encyclopedias, and computer reference programs and research tools such as interviews and surveys to find the information they need to meet specific demands, explore interests, or solve specific problems.

1.2 Old Students construct meaning from a variety of print materials for a variety of purposes through **reading.**

New Students make sense of the variety of materials they read.

1.3 Old Students construct meaning from messages communicated in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes through **observing.**

New Students make sense of the various things they observe.

1.4 Old Students construct meaning from messages communicated in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes through **listening.**

New Students make sense of the various messages to which they listen.

1.5 Old Students communicate ideas by **quantifying** with whole, rational, real and/or complex numbers.

1.6 Students manipulate information and communicate ideas with a variety of **computational algorithms.**

1.7 Students organize information and communicate ideas by **visualizing space configurations and movements.**

1.8 Students gather information and communicate ideas by **measuring.**

1.9 Students organize information and communicate ideas by **algebraic and geometric reasoning** such as relations, patterns, variables, unknown quantities, deductive and inductive processes.

1.5-1.9 New Students use mathematical ideas and procedures to communicate, reason, and solve problems.

1.10 Old Students organize information through development and use of **classification** rules and classification systems.

New Students organize information through development and use of **classification** rules and systems.

1.11 Old Students communicate ideas and information to a variety of audiences for a variety of purposes in a variety of modes through **writing.**

New Students write using appropriate forms, conventions, and styles to communicate ideas and information to different audiences for different purposes.

1.12 Old Students communicate ideas and information to a variety of audiences for a variety of purposes in a variety of modes through **speaking**.

New Students speak using appropriate forms, conventions, and styles to communicate ideas and information to different audiences for different purposes.

1.13 Old Students construct meaning and/or communicate ideas and emotions through the **visual arts**.

New Students make sense of ideas and communicate ideas with the visual arts.

1.14 Old Students construct meaning and/or communicate ideas and emotions through **music**.

New Students make sense of ideas and communicate ideas with music.

1.15 Old Students construct meaning and/or communicate ideas and emotions through **movement**.

New Students make sense of and communicate ideas with movement.

1.16 Old Students use computers and other electronic **technology** to gather, organize, manipulate, and express information and ideas.

New Students use computers and others kinds of technology to collect, organize, and communicate information and ideas.

Goal 2 - Students shall develop their abilities to apply core concepts and principles from mathematics, the sciences, the arts, the humanities, social studies, practical living studies, and vocational studies to what they will encounter throughout their lives.

Science

2.1 Old Students use appropriate and relevant **scientific skills** to solve specific problems in real life situations.

New Students understand scientific ways of thinking and working and use those methods to solve real-life problems.

2.2 Old Students identify, compare, and contrast **patterns** and use patterns to understand and interpret past and present events and predict future events.

New Students identify, analyze, and use patterns such as cycles and trends to understand past and present events and predict possible future events.

2.3 Old Students identify and describe **systems**, subsystems, and components and their interactions by completing tasks and/or creating products.

New Students identify and analyze **systems** and the ways their components work together or affect each other.

2.4 Old Students use **models and scales** to explain or predict the organization, function, and behavior of objects, materials, and

living things in their environment.

New Students use the concept of scale and scientific models to explain the organization and functioning of living and nonliving things and predict other characteristics that might be observed.

2.5 Old Students understand the **tendency of nature to remain constant** or move toward a steady state in closed systems.

New Students understand that under certain conditions nature tends to remain the same or move toward a balance.

2.6 Old Students complete tasks and/or develop products which identify, describe, and direct **evolutionary change** which has occurred or is occurring around them.

New Students understand how living and nonliving things change over time and the factors that influence the changes.

Math

2.7 Old Students demonstrate understanding of **number concepts**.

New Students understand number concepts and use numbers appropriately and accurately.

2.8 Old Students demonstrate understanding of concepts related to **mathematical procedures**.

New Students understand various mathematical procedures and use them appropriately and accurately.

2.9 Old Students demonstrate understanding of concepts related to **space and dimensionality**.

New Students understand space and dimensionality concepts use them appropriately and accurately.

2.10 Old Students demonstrate understanding of **measurement** concepts.

New Students understand measurement concepts and use measurements appropriately and accurately.

2.11 Old Students demonstrate understanding of **change** concepts on patterns and functions.

New Students understand mathematical change concepts and use them appropriately and accurately.

2.12 Old Students demonstrate understanding of concepts related to **mathematical structure**.

New Students understand mathematical structure concepts including the properties of logic of various mathematical systems.

2.13 Old Students demonstrate understanding of **data** concepts related to both certain and uncertain events.

New Students understand and appropriately use statistics and probability.

Social Studies

2.14 Old Students recognize issues of justice, equality, responsibility,

choice and freedom and apply these **democratic principles** to real-life situations.

New Students understand the democratic principles of justice, equality, responsibility, and freedom and apply them to real-life situations.

2.15 Old Students recognize varying **forms of government** and address issues of importance to citizens in a democracy, including authority, power, civic action, and rights and responsibilities.

New Students can accurately describe various forms of government and analyze issues that relate to the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy.

2.16 Old Students recognize varying **social groupings and institutions** and address issues of importance to members of them, including beliefs, customs, norms, roles, equity, order, and change.

New Students observe, analyze, and interpret human behaviors, social groupings, and institutions to better understand people and the relationships among individuals and groups.

2.17 Old Students interact effectively and work cooperatively with the **diverse ethnic and cultural groups** of our nation and world.

New Students interact effectively and work cooperatively with the **many ethnic and cultural groups** of our nation and world.

2.18 Old Students make **economic decisions** regarding production and consumption of goods and services related to real life situations.

New Students understand economic principles and are able to make economic decisions that have consequences for daily living.

2.19 Old Students recognize the **geographic interaction between people and their surroundings** in order to make decisions and take actions that reflect responsibility for the environment.

New Students recognize and understand the relationship between people and geography and apply their knowledge in real-life situations.

2.20 Old Students recognize **continuity and change in historical events, conditions, trends, and issues** in order to make decisions for a better future.

New Students understand, analyze, and interpret historical events, conditions, trends, and issues to develop historical perspective.

2.21 Old Students observe, analyze, and interpret human behaviors to acquire a better understanding of self, others, and **human relationships.**

New (Incorporated into 2.16)

Arts and Humanities

2.22 Old **Students create products and make presentations** that convey concepts and feelings.

New Students create works of art and make presentations to convey a point of view.

2.23 Old Students **analyze** their own and others artistic **products and performances.**

New Students **analyze** their own and others artistic **products and performances using accepted standards.**

2.24 Old Students **appreciate creativity and the values of the arts** and the humanities.

New Students have knowledge of major works of art, music, and literature and appreciate creativity and the contributions to the arts and humanities.

2.25 Old Through their productions and performances or interpretations, students show an understanding of the **influence of time, place, personality, and society on the arts and humanities.**

New In the products they make and the performances they present, students show that they understand how time, place, and society influence the arts and humanities such as languages, literature, and history.

2.26 Old Students recognize **differences and commonalities in the human experience** through their productions, performances, or interpretations.

New Through the arts and humanities, students recognize that although people are different, they share common experiences and attitudes.

2.27 Old Students complete tasks, make presentations, and create models that demonstrate awareness of the **diversity of forms, structures, and concepts across languages** and how they may interrelate.

New Students recognize and understand the similarities and differences among languages.

2.28 Old Students understand and communicate in a **second language.**

New (Unchanged).

Practical Living Studies

2.29 Old Students demonstrate positive **individual and family-life skills.**

New Students demonstrate skills that promote individual well-being and healthy family relationships.

2.30 Old Students demonstrate effective decision-making and evaluative **consumer skills.**

New Students evaluate consumer products and services and make effective consumer decisions.

2.31 Old Students demonstrate skills and self-responsibility in understanding, achieving, and maintaining **physical wellness.**

New Students demonstrate the knowledge and skills they need to remain physically fit healthy and to accept responsibility for their own physical well-being.

2.32 Old Students demonstrate positive strategies for achieving and maintaining **mental and emotional wellness.**

New Students demonstrate strategies for becoming and remaining **mentally and emotionally healthy.**

2.33 Old Students will demonstrate the ability to assess and access health systems, services and resources available in their community which maintain and promote **healthy living** for its citizens.

New Students demonstrate the skills to evaluate and use services and resources available in their community.

2.34 Old Students perform **psychomotor skills** effectively and efficiently in a variety of settings.

New Students perform physical movement skills effectively in a variety of settings.

2.35 Old Students demonstrate knowledge, skills, and values that have lifetime implications for involvement in **physical activity.**

New Students demonstrate knowledge and skills that promote physical activity and involvement in **physical activity** throughout their lives.

Vocational Studies

2.36 Old Students demonstrate strategies for selecting **career path** options.

New Students use strategies for choosing and preparing for a career.

2.37 Old Students produce and/or make presentations that communicate school-to-work/post-secondary **transition skills.**

New Students demonstrate skills and work habits that lead to success in future schooling and work.

2.38 Old Students demonstrate the ability to complete a **post-secondary opportunities search.**

New Students demonstrate skills such as interviewing, writing resumes, and completing applications that are needed to be accepted into college or other postsecondary training or to get a job.

Goal 3 - Students shall develop their abilities to become self-sufficient individuals.

3.1 Old Students demonstrate positive growth in **self-concept** through appropriate tasks or projects.

New (Eliminated.)

3.2 Old Students demonstrate the ability to maintain a **healthy life-style.**

New (Eliminated.)

3.3 Old Students demonstrate the ability to be **adaptable and flexible** through appropriate tasks or projects.

New (Eliminated.)

3.4 Old Students demonstrate the ability to be **resourceful and creative.**

New (Eliminated.)

3.5 Old Students demonstrate **self-control and self-discipline.**
New (Eliminated.)

3.6 Old Students demonstrate the ability to make decisions based on **ethical values.**
New (Eliminated.)

3.7 Old Students demonstrate the ability to **learn on one's own.**
New (Eliminated.)

Goal 4 - Students shall develop their abilities to become responsible members of a family, work group, or community, including demonstrating effectiveness in community service.

4.1 Old Students effectively use **interpersonal skills.**
New (Eliminated.)

4.2 Old Students use **productive team membership** skills.
New (Eliminated.)

4.3 Old Students individually demonstrate **consistent, responsive, and caring behavior.**
New (Eliminated.)

4.4 Old Students demonstrate the ability to **accept the rights and responsibilities for self and others.**
New (Eliminated.)

4.5 Old Students demonstrate the understanding of, appreciation for, and sensitivity to a **multicultural and world view.**
New (Eliminated.)

4.6 Old Students demonstrate an **open mind to alternative perspectives.**
New (Eliminated.)

Goal 5 - Students shall develop their abilities to think and solve problems in school situations and in a variety of situations they will encounter in life.

5.1 Old Students use **critical thinking skills** in a variety of situations that will be encountered in life.
New Students use critical thinking skills such as analyzing, prioritizing, categorizing, evaluating, and comparing to solve a variety of problems in real-life situations.

5.2 Old Students use **creative thinking skills** to develop or invent novel, constructive ideas or products.
New (Unchanged.)

5.3 Old Students **create and modify their understanding of a concept** through organizing information.

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New Students organize information to develop or change their understanding of a concept.

5.4 Old Students use a **decision-making process** to make informed decisions among options.

New (Unchanged.)

5.5 Old Students use **problem-solving processes** to develop solutions to relatively complex problems.

New (Unchanged.)

Goal 6 - Students shall develop their abilities to connect and integrate experiences and new knowledge from all subject matter fields with what they have previously learned and build on past learning experiences to acquire new information through various media sources.

6.1 Old Students address situations (e. g. topics, problems, decisions, products) from **multiple perspectives** and produce presentations or products that demonstrate a broad understanding. Examples of perspectives include: economic, social, cultural, political, historic, physical, technical, aesthetic, environmental, and personal.

New Students connect knowledge and experiences from different subject areas.

6.2 Old Students use what they already know to **acquire new knowledge, develop new skills, or interpret new experiences.**

New (Unchanged.)

6.3 Old Students expand their understanding of existing knowledge (e.g., topic, problem, situation, product) by **making connections** with new and unfamiliar knowledge, skills, and experiences.

New Students expand their understanding of existing knowledge by **making connections** with new knowledge, skills, and experiences.

(Sources: Kentucky Department of Education, 1993; July 1994).

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